



## **Cdn. boy urges peers to raise tsunami aid funds**

Updated Sat. Jan. 1 2005 7:56 AM ET

*CTV.ca News Staff*

An eight-year-old UNICEF Canada spokesperson is appealing to his peers to raise \$100 each in a bid to help suffering children affected by the devastating tsunami as part of the Canada Kids Earthquake Challenge campaign.

Bilal Rajan challenged Canadian kids to raise money Friday morning at a Toronto news conference.

"I don't think it's fair that other kids don't have what we in Canada take for granted," Bilal said. "That's why I want to start this campaign and I hope other kids will start to raise funds for the children in South Asia."

He has set a personal goal of \$10,000 and hopes to achieve his mark by selling artwork donated by local artists and multi-coloured plates he makes at home. Bilal has already raised \$7,200.

He's had practice, his mother Shamim Rajan says. Bilal first raised funds for the 2001 earthquake in India when he was only five years old.

And last fall, when Bilal wanted to help children affected by tropical storms in Haiti and Caribbean countries, he raised \$6,000. Instead of donating his allowance as his parents suggested, he raised the funds by selling cookies.

UNICEF Canada hopes the campaign will raise \$1 million for tsunami aid.

The Toronto District School Board has already responded to Bilal's plea and announced its partnership with UNICEF Canada on Friday.

The school board will be accepting donations at all of their schools and will also be encouraging students to fundraise for the campaign.

UNICEF estimates that children make up at least one-third of casualties in the affected regions.

The organization is working to provide safe water, medicine and supplies in the hardest-hit South Asian communities to prevent illness and death from water-borne diseases.

Children are at risk of contracting cholera or diarrhea by drinking contaminated water.

Several countries have already received shipments from UNICEF Canada, including: emergency health kits, oral rehydration salts, water purification tablets, chlorine powder, family relief kits, and recreation kits to children and families traumatized by the disaster.

The charity estimates that close to \$30 million is required to respond to initial problems in Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

By Friday morning, Canadians had already donated close to \$3 million to the charity.

"The devastation caused by this natural disaster is unprecedented, and the humanitarian outreach required is enormous -- we're talking billions of dollars," David Agnew, president and chief executive officer of UNICEF Canada said in an earlier statement.

"Every donation is critical, and we are thankful to the thousands of Canadians who have responded to UNICEF Canada's appeal in the past few days. But more money is urgently needed -- these children have been through so much, and our response now is critical to their survival."

It's estimated that since the disaster, Canadians have donated \$32 million, mostly online, to Canadian Red Cross, Care Canada, Oxfam Canada, UNICEF Canada, and World Vision Canada. The Red Cross said it was overwhelmed.

Donations to the Canada Kids Earthquake Challenge campaign can be made online at [www.unicef.ca](http://www.unicef.ca) or by toll-free telephone at 1-877-955-3111.